

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 19

INTRODUCED BY E. LIESER

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A JOINT RESOLUTION OF THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA EMPHASIZING THE VALUE OF PUBLIC LANDS IN MONTANA TO THE STATE'S ECONOMY, RECREATION, HERITAGE, AND QUALITY OF LIFE; AND OPPOSING ANY EFFORT TO CLAIM, TAKE OVER, LITIGATE FOR, OR SELL OFF FEDERAL LANDS WITHIN THE STATE OF MONTANA.

WHEREAS, Montana has some of the most beautiful landscapes on earth, including mountains, rivers, forests, foothills, prairies, sagebrush steppes and badlands; and

WHEREAS, many of those stunning places are public lands owned by all Americans; and

WHEREAS, public land under the management of the U.S. Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and other federal agencies constitutes more than 28% of the land in Montana; and

WHEREAS, these federal lands in Montana are essential to the quality of life in Montana, providing public recreational opportunity for hunting, fishing, hiking, snowmobiling, riding all-terrain vehicles, wildlife watching, backpacking, skiing, cycling, sightseeing, and numerous other outdoor recreational activities; and

WHEREAS, these federal lands are also incredibly rich in wildlife; and

WHEREAS, Montanans of every economic class enjoy world-class hunting and angling opportunities, including on these public lands; and

WHEREAS, outdoor recreation is a major economic driver in Montana, generating an estimated \$5.8 billion in economic activity and supporting more than 62,000 jobs in the state according to a study conducted by the Outdoor Industry Association; and

WHEREAS, Montana business owners consistently cite the appeal of outdoor recreation as a major draw to help recruit employees to new and existing businesses in our state, which is another way federal public lands help drive our economy; and

WHEREAS, Montana's agriculture industry includes numerous ranchers who depend on grazing on public land, including federal land, to sustain their operations; and

WHEREAS, Montana's timber industry is dependent on federal land for a part of its timber supply; and

WHEREAS, there is a broad consensus in Montana on the need for more effective management of our forests in areas near communities and public infrastructure; and

1 WHEREAS, Montanans are actively collaborating among diverse interests and with federal land
2 managers to move good forest management projects forward; and

3 WHEREAS, federal agencies that manage these lands employ hundreds of Montanans who pay taxes
4 and contribute to their communities; and

5 WHEREAS, Americans from throughout the country value these public lands as a part of our national
6 heritage; and

7 WHEREAS, Montana's forests are naturally prone to fire, including periodic large-scale fires, as part of
8 the ecosystem in which they have evolved over millennia, although a warming climate has accentuated the
9 process; and

10 WHEREAS, federal money to fund firefighting costs is essential to protecting communities and public
11 infrastructure, including municipal watersheds, particularly in dry years; and

12 WHEREAS, periodically severe wildland fire seasons can result in suppression costs in the tens of
13 millions of dollars in Montana alone; and

14 WHEREAS, in the event that Montana were to acquire federal lands, a severe fire season would be
15 difficult for Montana to pay for out of the state budget and would require large state tax increases; and

16 WHEREAS, a 2014 poll conducted by Colorado College found that Montanans are hunters and anglers
17 at some of the highest rates in the country; and

18 WHEREAS, that same poll showed that Montanans by more than 70% oppose efforts to dispose of
19 federal lands; and

20 WHEREAS, decades of declining funding to federal land management agencies has reduced their
21 capacity to meet their multiple use mission.

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23 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
24 STATE OF MONTANA:

25 That the Montana Legislature oppose any effort to claim, take over, litigate for, or sell off federal lands
26 within the State of Montana.

27 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Legislature strongly support federal land management in Montana
28 and the incredible value they bring to our state's economy, recreation, heritage, and quality of life.

29 - END -